

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Paul's Ministry in Thessalonica

¹ You know, brothers and sisters, that our visit to you was not without results. ² We had previously suffered and been treated outrageously in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in the face of strong opposition. ³ For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. ⁴ On the contrary, we speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please people but God, who tests our hearts. ⁵ You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness. ⁶ We were not looking for praise from people, not from you or anyone else, even though as apostles of Christ we could have asserted our authority. ⁷ Instead, we were like young children among you. Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, ⁸ so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well. ⁹ Surely you remember, brothers and sisters, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you. ¹⁰ You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed. ¹¹ For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, ¹² encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

Discussion Questions

1. **Start off tonight with a fun version of a no-contact game that your group enjoys. Has your group played the zoo game? Or signs? Play one of those! Or maybe Heads Up, Catch Phrase, or Fish Bowl? Call your co's or someone on the student team to discuss ideas!**
2. **Either individually or as a group, go through each verse of this passage identifying Paul's characteristics as he ministered to the Philippians. This is a good time to put pen to paper and brainstorm as a group as you take notes in a journal.**

Leader Tip: Paul was:

bold in spite of opposition (v. 2), accurate with his message (v. 3), pure in his motives (v. 3), honest in his methods (v. 3), not a man-pleaser, but a God-pleaser (v. 4), truthful (v. 5), not greedy (v. 5), not egotistical (v. 6), gentle, unselfish (v. 7), affectionate, transparent (v. 8), hardworking (v. 9), devoted to God (v. 10), upright toward others (v. 10), blameless in his own eyes (v. 10), earnest in his instruction (v. 11), and purposeful in his objective (v. 12).

3. Read verses 1-4.

What do you think it means to be entrusted with the gospel?

Theological Thought: To be entrusted with the gospel is to live out its claims; “I know I am a sinner,” “I believe in Jesus’ grace and mercy,” etc. Some examples of *not* being entrusted with the gospel include someone who lives in pride, is always pretending, addicted to performing, engulfed in shame, drowning in guilt, or dishes out judgement.

4. Read verse 5-8. Reread verses 7-8.

In the same statement, Paul compares himself to a child and also to a mother. How are these statements alike? How are they different?

Leader Tip: Both a lowly child and a servant-hearted mother are examples of great humility. Take some time to discuss how the pictures of a humble child and a humble mother could show us examples of Christ-like humility. There’s also some good imagery in the *nursing* mother idea (what a mother consumes is passed on to her child, etc.). *Use discernment on whether or not your group can handle discussing this topic.

5. Read verses 9-10. Paul describes their actions as holy, righteous, and blameless. What do these words mean?

Leader Tip: to be *Holy* is to be separated from sin. This is tied directly to the doctrine that God is separated from sin and devoted to seeking his own honor. To be *Righteous* is to act in accordance with what is right. This is tied directly to the doctrine that God is Himself the final standard of what is right. To be *Blameless* is to be morally perfect in God’s sight, a characteristic of those who follow God’s word completely.

6. Take some time to think back to your last week. Can you give an example of a time when your interactions with someone were NOT holy or righteous or blameless? Can you think of a time when they were?

7. Read verses 11-12. Take a moment to do your own version or an encouragement circle. In whatever way your group would respond well, take some time to “comfort, encourage, and urge each other toward the living worthy of God.”

8. Pray for God to grow our leadership through love and sacrifice this week.